

Paul was saved by grace, not because his sins were done ignorantly. His salvation was solely by the grace of God which flows out to save us despite our sins. His sins against Christ were done ignorantly. He actually thought he was doing God service. But, looking back, he marvels that God would choose to place one into service ministering the very gospel that he had so opposed. And to even bring that gospel to the Gentiles. Paul's knowledge that he was unworthy of the apostleship given him impels him even more to fulfill it faithfully. He has a good conscience now. Despite his past enmity to the faith he has no qualms about using his authority to deliver to Satan some who had put away faith and a good conscience.

Now having endeavored to encourage and fortify Timothy to carry on the work, Paul launches into instructions and exhortations to convey to the saints (that's us). By preserving this epistle Timothy and his fellow saints ensured that millions of us down through the years would benefit from the instructions given us by it.

Paul first instructs us regarding prayer to be offered, not just for the saints, but for all men. We are then especially told to pray for all those at all levels of earthly authority.

Authority – prominence, superiority in rank or character, having a position of excellency, better, higher, supreme.

For kings – who have absolute rule – and all under them at every level of government. Not just the top ruler of our nation but the heads of other nations as well. How wide are the arms of grace, spreading far beyond the borders of our own nation. And as we pray for these, our hearts are opened to seek to spread the gospel to them. We might include our employers and school teachers in our prayers as well. Paul's exhortation is all inclusive. He names four types of prayer.

Supplication – *deesis* – a wanting, a need, a desire, a petition, a request, an entreaty.

Prayer – *proseuche* – reverent prayer, request petition to God.

Intercession – *enteuxis* – to personally entreat a superior on behalf of another.

Giving of Thanks – *eucharistia* – gratitude; actively grateful language, thankfulness, thanksgiving.

Are we to pray for one in authority who is corrupt, unjust, personally wicked – one who is persecuting the saints, even harming us and our loved ones? Give thanks for them? The authorities in Paul's day did that. Paul (Saul) himself had. Yet he and Peter call for respect for those in authority, Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-20. God has put authorities in that place of honor and power to represent Him. One of the most wicked rulers ever, Nero emperor of Rome, imprisoned Paul. Paul used the opportunity to seek to witness to him as he had earlier to others in authority. Acts 23 - 24; 2 Timothy 4:16-17.

The desired outcome first mentioned is that we believers

might live a quiet and peaceable life. A life characterized by all godliness and honesty. Rallies by so-called "Christians" against governmental policies or officials, against war or against immorality such as abortion, "gay rights," promiscuity, etc. are not part of the expected Christian testimony on earth. This is not quiet or peaceable conduct. Paul does not endorse political involvement or protest movements by Christians. He exhorts us to prayer. Prayer for all men, not just those that are good. Praying for them frees us from resentment and discontent. Prayer enables us to bring them the gospel with a good conscience.

Luke 5:32 I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

We pray for them because this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior. Not because they are good and acceptable to God or us.. Why is it good to pray for them? Because He will have all men to be saved. Further, He desires all men to come into the knowledge of the truth.

For Christians to resist or to seek to overthrow those in authority is counter to God's desire for all men to be saved. Even working through constitutionally legal processes such as court action, appeals for new legislation, or appeals for enforcement of current laws does not contribute to God's earnest desire that all men be saved. Because of his fallen nature and sinful acts Man is at enmity with God. Man is not even interested in reconciliation with God. Man cannot be successfully reformed and thereby qualified to be accepted into the kingdom of God. No. Attempts to reform the world will only excite resistance and rebellion rather than conviction of sin. They will not accept the need for mediation much less a mediator. Praying for "the powers that be" and being subject to them glorifies God and supports the gospel. It opens the way for the Spirit to convict men of sin and to look for salvation.

God has provided the only possible mediator between God and Man, the Man Christ Jesus. This Mediator does not negotiate a mere settlement of differences between two parties. One party, God, needs no reconciliation with man. Man desperately needs to be reconciled to God. Man needed a ransom be paid in order to eliminate the vast chasm of sin separating him from God. God provided that ransom. His Son became a man, the son of Man, in order to pay the needed ransom on behalf of sinful men. (Here we have a clear statement of truths essential to the Christian faith. Jesus Christ is God. Jesus Christ is a Man, a human.) At the time when this was accomplished few knew or realized what had been done. In due time God saw to it that a testimony went out to the Jew first then also to the Gentiles. The amazing thing was that, not only did God send the twelve disciples into all the world with the message, Matthew 28:18-20, but he called and sent Saul, called Paul, a Jew who had persecuted Christians. He was ordained (appointed) by God to be a preacher and an apostle. First to proclaim the Good News but also to bring

the truth directly from the ascended Lord Jesus. And that not only to the Jews but especially to teach the Gentiles in faith and truth. There was absolutely no human involvement in appointing Paul to the service of the Lord, not even from the Twelve in Jerusalem. He “conferred not with men,” Galatians 1:1; 10-12; 16-22; 2:1-2, 6-7, 9.

Why did Paul say “I tell the truth, I do not lie”? Did he think Timothy wouldn’t believe him? Or was he anticipating critics from among those to whom Timothy would be ministering? He was the apostle especially ordained by God to preach and teach among the Gentiles. Was that still so hard to believe after all the work he had already accomplished? Apparently so. How many professing believers follow Paul’s gospel today? How many faithfully follow his teaching regarding the assembly? Do you? Do we?

In fact the departure began shortly after this letter was written. He wrote it to head it off. But soon Paul had to sorrowfully write in his second letter:

2Timothy 1:15 This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me;...

Summing up

Having established the urgency for prayer for all men, and especially for those in authority, he urges that Christian men, males, brothers in Christ, pray everywhere. That is, pray publically. We are to have prayer meetings. We are to have prayer in the assembly. Thanksgiving in

restaurants, at work, at school and in homes. Praying, we are to have holy hands that can be raised in supplication for others. Not hypocrites. Not seeking to appear godly to receive recognition from others. The Lord exposes and denounces such in Matthew 6:5-13. If we live a life above reproach no observer will be able to rightly question the authenticity of the prayer we offer or doubt it is truly heard in heaven by God. And we believers can freely endorse such, saying **Amen**.

But God cannot look upon sin.

Psalm 66:18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:

[See also Job 27:9; Proverbs 15:29; 28:9;

Isaiah 1:15; John 9:31; James 4:3]

One who attempts to approach Him with unconfessed sin will not be heard. But:

1John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Pray with clean hands, a good conscience. Pray without wrath or doubting. Pray, not attacking others in our prayer, not cursing but blessing. Pray, not doubting but believing. Pray publically but pray privately first. And along with our holy hands an uncovered head of short hair.

By Ron Canner, March 1, 2006